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Meeting Notes

Attendees: See attached list Date/Time: August 7, 2001

Project No.: 50885

Place: Windham Town Hall Re: Selectmen's Meeting

Notes taken by: Bruce A. Tasker

Jeff Brillhart began the meeting by noting that in April of this year, just prior to the Windham ATF meeting, the Windham Selectmen sent a letter to the Department raising four issues in the letter, which the Department did not have the time to address and present at the April ATF meeting. Since then, the Department has reviewed the issues.

The Selectmen requested consideration of moving the I-93 barrels closer together and as a result reducing the footprint of I-93 in Windham. Currently, the NB and SB barrels of I-93 are separated by as much as 1,200 feet in the Exit 3 area with private property located between the barrels of the interstate. Jeff explained that the preliminary review identified that there are some substantial costs associated with reconstructing the barrels closer together, but there are also some benefits in terms of highway geometrics, water quality, and wetland restoration, among others.

A second request by the Selectmen was to not relocate NH 111 to the north (west of I-93 SB) but to tie the NH111 /I-93 interchange construction into the existing NH 111 alignment as much as possible. Jeff noted that this issue was looked at and is and is problematic in terms of traffic-operations, if the needs long term needs (2020) of the interchange and NH 111 are to be met.

A third request by the Selectmen was to connect Wall Street to North Lowell Road to reduce the amount of traffic that goes through Windham Center. Jeff noted that this idea has some merit to reduce traffic along NH 111 in the Center, but that this idea should not be part of the I-93 project.

The fourth request by the Selectmen was consideration of noise barriers for those residents of Windham that might be affected by noise from I-93. Jeff noted that the Department is evaluating the noise barrier locations for neighborhoods along the entire project length including Windham.

Bruce Tasker then presented the 200 scale plans developed for widening I-93 and reconstructing the Exit 3 interchange in the Windham area. He explained the typical cross section that shows a three-lane widening of I-93 and a four-lane widening of I-93. Bruce noted that approximately 60 to 90 feet inside the median area is being reserved for a potential future rail line. Bruce presented an overview of the plans previously presented at the ATF meeting and then provided a somewhat more detailed review of the concept to reduce the I-93 footprint.

Original Options

Bruce described the alignment layout for the original concepts shown at the April ATF meeting. The basis of the original concepts is to essentially retain and widen the existing I-93 barrels by holding the outside edges of the existing highway and widening toward the median to either 3 or 4 -lanes wherever possible.

The exceptions to this widening methodology involve a section of the northbound barrel and southbound barrel in the Exit 3-interchange area:

In the Exit 3 interchange area, the NB barrel is proposed to be shifted westerly approximately 500 feet to allow for more separation (from 500 feet to almost 1,100 feet) between the new NB off-ramp signalized intersection and the existing NH 111-A signalized intersection.

For the section of the SB barrel in the Exit 3 interchange area, I-93 is relocated to the east as the SB barrel passes over NH 111. The alignment is shifted just to the east of the SB bridge to allow for the new SB bridge to be completed without hindering traffic on existing I-93.

Bruce explained that east of the I-93 SB barrel the improvement proposed for NH 111 is generally the same. The widening and reconstruction occurs primarily to the south side of NH 111 with a 4 to 5-foot grade-raise to improve the profile along NH 111.

Relative to the NB interchange off-ramp, in all cases the I-93 NB traffic exiting to NH 111 EB or WB, a diamond type ramp is proposed. The NB off-ramp is a two-lane ramp which transitions to a double-left turn lane and a double-right turn at a signalized intersection with NH 111.

Relative to the NB interchange on-ramp there are two options. They include:

For the NH 111 EB to I-93 NB movement, traffic could utilize a free-flow on-ramp, designed as a single lane free-flow loop ramp in the SE quadrant of the interchange. In this configuration the NB on-ramp for NH 111 WB traffic also utilizes a free-flow ramp. Both of the NB on-ramps are merged into one lane north of the Exit 3 interchange before merging with the I-93 NB mainline through traffic.

A second option that for the NB on-ramp that connects NH 111 to I-93 involves using a signalized intersection with NH 111. The NH 111 EB traffic would operate as a yield/signalized right-turn lane before turning onto the loop ramp layout. The NH 111 WB traffic would turn left from a double-left turn lane at the same signalized intersection (similar to the current configuration), however the loop ramp would be developed as two-lanes before merging to one lane and then merging directly with the I-93 NB mainline through traffic.

Bruce noted that there are several options for NH 111 and the interchange ramps west of the SB barrel. For NH 111, the options include:

A "Partial" relocation alternative where a portion of NH 111 is relocated 100-200 feet north of existing NH 111 with the relocation ending east of the Wall Street intersection. The relocated section of NH 111 would be 5-lanes (2 in each direction with a center turn lane) and this cross section would extend to just west of the Wall Street intersection. The bypassed portion of existing NH 111 would be connected to the new section of NH 111 and a portion of Garden Road would be reconstructed and connected to this intersection. A turnaround at the easterly end would allow vehicles to reverse direction on the dead-ended portion of NH 111. This layout for NH 111 could essentially remove all existing development along the north side of existing NH 111.

A "Full" relocation of NH 111 where NH 111 is relocated 400 to 500 feet north of existing NH 111. The new segment would be a 5-lane section, again extending to just west of the Wall Street intersection before transitioning to a 3-lane section at the signalized intersection at the Village Green stores. The intent of this alternative is to allow the existing section of NH 111 (2,500 feet) that is bypassed to be retained (to a point just east

of the Castleton Drive) as a frontage road to provide access to the remaining businesses and properties. The bypassed portion of existing NH 111 would be connected to relocated NH 111 at a signalized intersection opposite Wall Street. A turnaround at the easterly end would allow vehicles to reverse direction on the dead-ended portion of NH 111.

An "On-line" alternative would provide for a 5-lane section as necessary to manage the traffic in the area of the SB ramp intersection and then transition to a 3-lane section somewhere west of Castleton Drive. The 3-lane section would then extend to the existing 3-lane section at the signalized intersection at the Village Green stores. The raised median island in the interchange area of the SB ramps would extend to Waters Edge Road precluding left turns from entering existing drives adjacent to the signalized intersection with the SB ramps. This layout would present operational problems due to congestion on NH 111WB backing up into the interchange area prior to the design year of 2020.

For the SB Ramps with NH 111 the options would include:

For the I-93 SB off-ramp in all cases traffic exiting to NH 111 EB or WB would be accommodated by a standard (albeit long) diamond type ramp.

For NH 111 EB traffic that desires to travel SB on I-93, a free-flow option is proposed.

For NH 111 WB traffic that wants to travel southerly onto I-93 there is a free-flow option and a signalized double left turn option.

The free-flow option involves a single lane free-flow loop ramp located in the NW quadrant of the interchange. The loop ramp is carried over NH 111 on a new bridge adjacent to the SB mainline bridge. The NH 111 EB to I-93 SB traffic merges with the NH 111 WB to I-93 SB traffic south of NH 111 and this traffic then merges with the I-93 SB mainline through traffic.

The signalized, double left turn option for the NH 111 WB to I-93 SB traffic involves a signalized intersection where the SB off ramp intersects with NH 111. The NH 111 WB traffic would turn left from a double-left turn lane at a signalized intersection and merge to a single lane. This lane, and the ramp lane for the NH 111 EB traffic, would then merge together south of NH 111 and proceed southerly as a two lane on-ramp before merging with the I-93 SB mainline through traffic.

The proposed park and ride lot for the original option would be developed in the median between the NB and SB barrels to the south of NH 111.

New Option for reduced I-93 footprint (Tight Concept)

Bruce then explained a revised concept for the Exit 3 interchange, which was developed in response to the Selectmen's request to reduce the I-93 footprint by shifting both the NB and the SB barrels into the median area. Bruce called this layout the "Tight Concept" referring to the smaller footprint of the design in the Exit 3 interchange area. The extent of the SB barrel shift into the median is controlled by design criteria and a need to minimize impacts to the locally important wetlands just south of NH 111-A in the median. Approximately 1.2 miles of the SB barrel is relocated approximately 150 feet east of the existing NH 111-A overpass and approximately 300 feet to the east of the existing SB barrel over NH 111 before transitioning back to the existing SB barrel to the north and south. The realignment of the NB barrel begins just north of the Brookdale Bridge adjacent to the SB barrel, covering a distance of approximately 2.2 miles, before ending approximately 0.5 miles south of the NB weigh station. A minimum width of approximately 90 feet is held in the median between the two barrels to preserve space for a potential rail line. The shift allows the NB ramps to be shifted away from the NH 111/NH 111-A intersection as with the original concept. With the shift of both the NB and SB barrels further into the existing median

area, the NB and SB ramps can also be shifted more into the median area further reducing the highway foot print. For the NB ramps, only one option would be developed where the ramps are configured as a diamond interchange with a signals at the at the NH 111 intersection.

The SB ramps would retain the same general ramp configurations as with the original concepts for the NH 111 Full Relocation or the NH 111 On-Line options. The options for reconstructing NH 111 to the west of the SB ramps are similar to the original concepts. The proposed park and ride lot for the tight concept would be developed outside the median, between the new NB barrel and the existing NB barrel.

Comments/Questions:

Comment: What are the impacts for the NH 111 On-line and the Full Relocation options?

Bruce Tasker: The property acquisition impacts to the east of the SB barrel are all the same regardless of which option is chosen, they would include the bank and real-estate office near the exiting NB ramps and the Dunkin Donuts and the Sunoco Station in the median area. To the west of the SB ramps for the on-line option the property acquisition impacts include a home on the north side of NH 111. To minimize impacts to properties with the On-line option and provide reasonable access two controls were generally established. First, the existing grade or vertical alignment of NH 111 was retained and second, the existing SB edge of NH 111 was held with all widening (in general) occurring to the north. By doing so property acquisitions were reduced, however retaining walls at the Letizio property and the Computer Auto Sales would be required. The existing drive to Woodland Ridge would require relocation and a possible retaining wall. The access to all properties between Water Edge Road and the SB ramps will behind a raised median island. The access to these properties would be right turn in and out only.

For the Full Relocation Option with the diamond ramp configuration the impacts west of the SB ramp would be include the acquisition of a home, the Exxon Station, and the Computer Auto Sales. The loop option would have the same impacts as the diamond design except that the loop design would require approximately eight additional acres of land.

Comment: When you raise I-93 over NH111 with the "Tight Option", what type of noise impact is that going have? Will the noise carry further, will it require the trucks to down shift? In other words, what difference will it have compared to today's layout?

Bruce Tasker: In the NB direction the I-93 grade will be similar to what exists today. If the trucks are downshifting today they would continue to do so. In the SB direction the existing grade is a 5% downhill grade and is the steepest along the 18-mile section of I-93. Because of the steep SB grade combined with the sharp curvature, and because of the off-ramp to NH 111 located at the bottom of the grade, trucks do have to down shift and brake along the highway and at the off-ramp. The new grade for the SB highway will be 3%, which is much flatter than the existing grade of 5%. However, with all of the proposed designs for Exit 3 SB off movements the existing loop ramp is eliminated and replaced with a diamond type off-ramp further to the north. Exiting trucks will still require down shifting, but not so much within the through lanes of the highway but within the deceleration lane and along the new off-ramp. The SB off-ramp will be shifted away from Cobbetts Pond area and most of the off-ramp will be in a cut section where the ramp is actually well below the existing ground elevation. This will act somewhat like a sound barrier and reduce the noise. I-93 SB itself is going to be approximately 50 feet above NH 111 (and approximately 30 feet in

elevation above the existing SB bridge elevation) as it passes over NH 111, so there may be some additional noise but that is something we will be evaluating.

- Comment: There are two large bodies of water and sound carries very well over the water. By raising I-93, I would think you would increase the amount of noise all over town where everyone would hear it.
- Bruce Tasker: We will be evaluating that change. I'm not sure there is a measurable difference between existing bridge elevation and a 30-foot higher bridge being proposed with the tight concept but that will be determined. I don't think that the raising of the SB barrel will add to the noise on Canobie Lake because there is a considerable hill to the east blocking the line of sight to the lake.
- Comment: With two lanes put together, noise will increase at low megahertz, like 38 megahertz. As it exists now, you don't hit 66 decibels and 38 megahertz, but what is going to happen later on when you redesign the road? The impact of the noise will be significantly greater than what you have today because when you bring the two barrels together and raise the highway the additive to the low megahertz is going to be a much bigger problem. Currently during motorcycle week, I measured 68 decibels at 38 megahertz. That is very loud. I live on the north shore of Cobbetts Pond near Gardner Road.
- Bruce Tasker: We will be evaluating how the noise impacts all of the interchange designs, but your point is well taken.
- Comment: Why isn't there a cloverleaf design? Also, I don't think there is room enough to create the amount of drainage swales and retention ponds that are needed to clean the highway runoff before it goes into the lake.
- Bruce Tasker: A number of drainage treatment areas are currently being looked at for the various alternatives. There are a number of locations, which we are considering, for example, within the interchange ramps and adjacent to the old interchange ramps. We are currently calculating the runoff volumes, sizing the detention basins and looking at all potential locations, throughout the area.
- Relative to cloverleaf interchanges – the intent here is to utilize the existing highway as much as possible and also to consider reducing the overall footprint of the highway. Cloverleaf interchanges in general require much greater land acquisition and resource impacts than do other interchange types such as a diamond. To meet the current design standards the cloverleaf interchanges are also somewhat larger than what was constructed 30-40 years ago. A cloverleaf in this area would also be difficult to construct because of the existing terrain and the existing highway grades.
- Comment: I was thinking that perhaps a cloverleaf loop for I-93 NB traffic that would go WB on NH 111. This would eliminate the backups that occur on I-93 today.
- Bruce Tasker: Actually that is a good point. The loop design you mentioned is generally considered capable of handling 1000 to 1200 vehicles per hour. The future traffic projections indicate that the volume for the NB to WB flow will be approximately 1700 to 1800 vehicle per hour, which is too great for a loop ramp design. The loop ramp design geometry would most likely impact the Searles Castle property and create a much larger impact footprint. The design for the NB off-ramp is proposed to be a diamond type layout with double-left turn lanes for the NB to WB flow and a double right turn

lane for the NB to EB flow. The proposed NH 111/ramp-intersection layout provides an acceptable level of service for handling the traffic for the future year volumes.

Comment: With respect to the On-line option, you are matching into existing NH 111 west of the SB ramps. So what are you doing with the profile?

Bruce Tasker: The new profile has to remain essentially the same as the existing to allow matches to the existing roads and driveways on the south side of NH 111 that intersect this section of NH 11, and to minimize impacts to the properties that front along NH 111.

Comment: Isn't there an accident problem because of the poor profile? There have been 16 accidents down there in the last few years.

Bruce Tasker: If the profile gets changed, one side of the road or the other will be much more severely impacted. The profile is a rolling profile today that is considered to be acceptable for 40mph. Today NH 111 is posted at 40mph and because this section is relatively straight the tendency is to travel at a pretty good rate of speed. We have looked at trying to change the profile but it cannot be done without substantial impacts to the properties.

Comment: How will I be able to get in and out of my drive or into the gas station?

Bruce Tasker: The idea as requested by the Selectmen is to provide for a center-turn lane which will allow left turning traffic to stop in a middle lane and not in the through lane. Today left-turning traffic stops in the through lane and through traffic uses the shoulder to go around or stops behind the left turning vehicle. The propose improvement also would incorporate a 10' shoulder, so people who are going to make right turns can pull out into the 10' shoulder and then turn right. The shoulder also provides a latitude of safety for pedestrians and bikes.

Comment: Widening another 10 feet on the shoulder means that the drives and roads that intersect NH 111 will have to match in at even a steeper grade. Do you think it will work?

Bruce Tasker: Essentially the idea is to hold the south side of NH 111 and widen to the north while maintaining the existing profile along NH 111. The drives and roadway approaches that connect to NH 111 from the south would be the same as they are today.

Comment: Wouldn't it make more sense to have a limited access highway for people trying to get through town? From a noise and traffic standpoint, shifting NH 111 to the north makes more sense.

Comment: The only option worth talking about is the Full Relocation option with as free flow as possible. The On-Line option is borderline insanity. Today, as a property owner along Cobbetts Pond, the only way I can make the left hand turn out of my driveway is to take a right, a quick left into another driveway, and cut off some people. The only thing that three-lane section does, is it gives you a chance to cut in front of two different groups of people. In addition, as soon as the road is a little bit better, there will be more traffic. People who are using NH 102 now to go to Londonderry will start using NH 111 because it is quicker.

Comment: I can't believe you are even thinking of five lanes of traffic on NH 111?

- Bruce Tasker: We need to show you the range of alternatives and five lanes is necessary to carry the traffic that is projected in the future.
- M. Kennedy: What it comes down to is that in the future, the volume of traffic here is going to be heavier than it is today. The objective here is to process the traffic along NH 111 at an acceptable level of service. You need two through lanes in each direction plus a left-turn lane to accommodate the traffic. The problem along NH 111 is not the two through lanes (one in each direction). The problem is at the intersections where there are not enough through lanes to process the queues at the signals. It is at the signals you that need the five-lane sections. Unfortunately the signals are so closely spaced the 5-lane section at one signal runs into the 5-lane section at the next signal and you end up with a 5-lane section if you want to process the traffic.
- Bruce Tasker: Because we are talking about the year 2020 traffic, any signal that does not provide two through lanes in each direction between I-93 and Lowell Road will become the bottleneck of the future. With one lane in each direction at the traffic signals the traffic will backup. More traffic will be arriving than the signal can handle in one lane.
- Comment: Will there also be backups with the Full Relocation option shown?
- Bruce Tasker: Yes, the backups will begin with this option at the Village Green signal. However, the length of queue will not be as long because the WB traffic will be storing in two lanes instead of just one lane as with the On-line option.

Selectperson Margaret Creisler: About 10 years ago, when NHDOT first began talking about NH111, it was evident that the NHDOT had an overall plan to connect I-93 with a major highway through Windham to Nashua. One of the concerns we have is that NHDOT is still heading in that direction, making NH 111 the major east-west highway for all traffic in southern New Hampshire, much to the detriment of Windham. That is why we are very concerned about widening and relocating NH 111. As you know, "if you build it, you get more traffic". It is a never-ending cycle. Ten lanes straight through town all the way to Hudson over to US 3 makes it attractive for people. If we tone it down and have less of a highway making it less attractive for everybody to cut through, maybe they will continue to move along US 3 up to I-293, and head north that way.

Jeff Brillhart: Ten years ago, when we were talking about NH 111, we were talking about NH 111 east of I-93. The Department did discuss the fact that traffic was growing along NH 111 west of I-93. As a consequence at that time, the Selectmen from the Town of Windham suggested that perhaps the Department should take a look at what might be done along NH 111 west of I-93. That was looked at. I am not suggesting that the Town is in favor of what the Department came up with, but the Department did not look at NH 111 to the west because the Department had an overall plan to get traffic through Windham from I-93 to Nashua. The idea to connect I-93 to Nashua was not anyone's plan. We were simply looking at how to address the problems here in Windham on NH 111. We are not suggesting with either one of these options now being considered that we are going to fix NH 111. We are trying to improve I-93. If there is something we can do or should be done as part of improving I-93 that makes sense, then I think we should do it.

I would also point out that we missed an opportunity to relocate NH 111 to the south of the new Town Center the last time that would have allowed the new Town Center

to connect to the old Town Center with only the bypassed portion of NH 111 (with much less traffic) bisecting the two centers. In hindsight, that seems unfortunate. I also believe that the "Build it, and they will come" phrase is overly simplistic. They are already here and they will continue to come. If this is a concern, the land use part of the equation must be addressed in a more serious manner. We need to be able to absorb this influx of people, because they are coming regardless of what happens to NH 111 and I-93.

Selectperson Roger Hohenberger: At the next meeting please provide me with the square footage of pavement for the On-line vs. the Full Relocation and also the existing pavement? It looks like the least impact to Cobbetts Pond is the On-line option, but I would like the square footage to compare.

Comment: Because of the raised median for the On-line option, where do all the cars turn around?

Bruce Tasker: There are no provisions for vehicles to turn around with the On-line option. Motorists will have to plan their trips as the operation for drives that are behind the median would be right turn in and right turn out only.

Comment: I don't think that there is any advantage to the On-line option. It is not a safe option. At the end of Marshfield Road, there have been 8 accidents. Reconstructing NH 111 is not a good option to be considering.

Comment: Is there any advantage to the On-line option?

Bruce Tasker: It would be less expensive to build and it would have fewer impacts. However, operationally it is much less desirable than the Full Relocation option.

Al Letizio: My business is along existing NH 111 and is one of the properties that you said would be less impacted. The fact is my windows to my conference room would be about 15 feet away from traffic. As far as I am concerned, it makes my property useless.

Comment: Can the connector to the bypassed section of NH 111 with the Full Relocation option be moved further to the east and not line up with Wall Street?

Bruce Tasker: It is physically possible to shift it somewhat to the east, but it would introduce another intersection along NH 111. If you shift the connection east then perhaps a signal would be required at that intersection, with another signal at the Wall Street intersection. The best solution is to locate connecting roads to NH 111 opposite each other with one signal.

Comment: Can you develop the loop ramp with the On-line option?

Bruce Tasker: Operationally it is difficult. The idea is to allow traffic heading EB on NH 111 to free flow onto the SB ramp. With a loop ramp the signal for the SB off-ramp moves further to the west. This situation for the On-line option requires the EB to SB traffic to pass through the signal creating an extremely long queue and failure level of service for the signalized intersection. For the On-line option the only way to provide EB to SB traffic a free flow condition is to remove the driveway to Castleton and a number of properties along the south side of NH 111. With the Full Relocation option the NH 111 EB to SB traffic can be shifted out of the signal's influence (without

affecting access to Castleton and other properties) and operate in a free flow condition.

- Comment: For the Full Relocation option if you bypass NH 111, how do you get back onto the bypassed portion of NH 111?
- Bruce Tasker: There is a proposed connector road that connects existing NH 111 with the new relocated section of NH 111 at the intersection with Wall Street.
- Comment: Would there be a signal at Wall Street?
- Bruce Tasker: Our preliminary evaluations indicate that there would be a need for a signal, perhaps not on opening day, but shortly thereafter.
- Comment: How many signals would there be along NH 111? Right now there are three on this stretch; one at NH 111A, one at the I-93 NB ramps and one at the Village Green. How many would be added?
- Bruce Tasker: Depending upon which option, the signals you mentioned would be retained. Additional signals would be provided at the park and ride, and the SB-off ramps with either the On-line option or the Full Relocation option. In addition to these signals, the Full Relocation option would have a signal at the Wall Street intersection.
- Comment: Why use the existing or the On-Line option? Is anyone in favor of the On-line option? Is there some reason for it?
- Jeff Brillhart: The Selectmen wrote the Department a letter asking the Department to consider keeping NH 111 on-line.
- Comment: The number one concern should be safety. The safety problem along this section of NH 111 is well documented.
- Selectperson Carolyn Weber: Basically there are three things the Town needs to concern itself with: the commercial, residential and historical impacts; more importantly the environmental impacts; and third the ever increasing traffic passing through Windham.
- The Select Board felt the On-line option should be looked at and discussed. The Select Board is here to listen.
- Regarding the third lane, when the Select Board discussed what to do along NH 111, the safety issue did come up and the concerns that people have were all understood and noted. We are aware that it is very difficult to get out of those driveways. I feel that with the third lane added, the design is a much better situation than what exists today.
- Comment: The design is unacceptable. You basically have a turning lane now. The through lane becomes a turning lane and others drive around the turning vehicle.
- Comment: Safety is probably the No. 1 concern. But the No. 2 concern is the concentration of salt going into Cobbetts Pond. The number of square feet of widening is not as important as the concentration of salt and the fact that the On-line option is so close to the Pond. I would like to see highway pulled away from the Pond reducing this impact. I would also think the businesses along existing NH 111 would be a lot better off.

- Bruce Tasker: The existing grades of NH 111 would essentially remain the same with the On-line option. The roadway section would be wider due to the third lane and wider shoulders. Perhaps more salt is needed where the NH 111 grades are somewhat steeper along the existing profile and because the vehicles are stopping and starting to access the drives and roads in this area. With the Full Relocation option, perhaps not as much salt is needed because vehicles are not stopping and starting along the relocated section except at the Wall Street and the SB ramp intersections. The through traffic along the relocated section would be driving on somewhat flatter grades than the traffic driving on the existing section of NH 111 for the On-Line option.
- Comment: I noticed the other week in the paper that somebody has coordinated the traffic signals in Londonderry. Now that we are going to have 5 or 6 signals, is there some consideration being given at tying the lights together.
- Bruce Tasker: The signals would be interconnected to the extent practical. Most likely the light at NH111A, the NB ramps, the park and ride lot and the SB ramps would be connected and coordinated.
- Comment: Is Indian Rock affected by either option for NH 111? It is approximately 50 feet north of NH 111.
- Bruce Tasker: The On-line option with most of the widening to the north might impact Indian Rock. The location of the Rock will be identified on future plans. **(Note: A field review shows that the Rock is located approximately 70 feet from the existing edge of NH 111, therefore neither option would directly impact the Rock.)**
- Comment: Are the taxpayers in Windham to bear the financial brunt of providing safety services, such as ambulances and fire trucks, when I-93 is under construction. The frequency of accidents that will increase as part of construction will seriously impact the Town's equipment. Is there any chance of getting help somewhere with this capital expense?
- Jeff Brillhart: The Department is working with the State Police, the Federal Highway Administration, and all of the towns along the corridor, to see how we can coordinate safety activities and traffic control when there are serious accidents now and in the future and during construction. Communication is being improved and initiatives are being developed. I am hopeful we will be able to do a better job. The Department will be taking a hard look as part of the final design process at how to rebuild this highway and maintain traffic. The intent is to maintain two lanes of traffic at all times, although there will be times, with ledge removal and whatever, where this will be difficult. One of the benefits with the Town's idea to reduce the I-93 footprint is that approximately two miles of the highway is proposed to be on new location. Traffic can stay on the existing road that travels through Windham for the most part and a contractor could construct a lot of I-93 without any interference. That is a real benefit. What else might be done during construction to address local expenditures needs additional discussion.
- Comment: When we increase the traffic flow with four lanes in each direction, won't the accident rate continue at a much higher rate than it is now?
- Jeff Brillhart: My sense is that it won't because there will be more room for people to maneuver around each other. There will be 12' shoulders on both sides of each barrel; today there are 10-foot shoulders on the outside and 4 foot shoulders on the inside. The

additional lanes will improve maneuverability. Also geometric deficiencies, primarily with the interchanges, will be improved.

Comment: Would you talk about the Park and Ride lot and the rail access?

Bruce Tasker: On the plan the rail corridor is shown as a crosshatched area. An area approximately 90 feet wide in the median has been reserved for the future rail corridor. Currently a light rail type vehicle (like the green line in Boston), which can traverse steeper grades and travel at 60mph, is proposed. A station could be developed in the vicinity of the NB Off-ramp for both bus and rail service. For the original concept for the I-93 mainline, access to the train would be direct. For the "tight concept" access to the train would be via a pedestrian bridge over the NB barrel providing access between the station and the platform.

Jeff Brillhart: We have studied the idea of rail enough to consider the reasonableness of the idea, but we haven't studied it enough to say a rail corridor on I-93 would be better than using the old Manchester/Lawrence Line or some other option. We need another study to build on what we have developed so far. From the Department's perspective, we need to begin this in-depth rail study fairly soon. Massachusetts needs to be a part of this study so we can really look at all the options. Issues such as how many trains can actually go to Boston; can a train in the median of I-93 extend down to the Woburn Transportation Center; can the Manchester-Lawrence line connect to the Haverhill Line into Boston without changing over; and others all need to be considered. The study will shed much more light on the future of rail through this area. The 90-foot space between the barrels seems like a good investment given the uncertainty of where rail might best be placed and the continuous improvements in rail technology.

Comment: Do you have an update on Castle Reach, the proposed mitigation site?

Jeff Brillhart: The Department appraised the property and made what it felt to be a reasonable offer. The counter-offered was about twice the Department's offer. It appears the negotiations are over.

Comment: We would like to see the speed limit decreased on Lowell Road between Morrill Street and I-93 from 40 mph to maybe 30 mph. Cars are currently going 50 to 60 mph.

Jeff Brillhart: This is a tough issue. We don't want to post speed limits that are artificially low, as that creates problems. We need to post speed limits in accordance with the geometry of the road, use of the road, and the safety of the public. Perhaps the posted speed needs to be re-evaluated by the Department in conjunction with local and State police.

Comment: When will construction begin?

Jeff Brillhart: There is no fixed date. We are trying to get everything underway by 2004. This requires getting to the public hearing and resolving the kinds of issues we discussed today for all five towns. If we can get to construction in 2004, we would look to be nearing completion by 2010. From the Department's perspective, this is of the highest priority. Funding is programmed and we need to get on with it. There is a lot of support for getting this project under construction.

- Comment: The only time there is a decrease in speed along NH 111 from Wall Street to I-93 is when there is a police officer parked at the day care center. There is a speeding problem here, as well.
- Comment: Are you considering both three and four lanes in each direction from Salem to Manchester?
- Jeff Brillhart: Yes, we are. The traffic numbers are saying four lanes are needed. North of Exit 3, the traffic numbers say we can get away with three lanes. If the layout calls for building three lanes, we will probably have to over widen the road to maintain traffic while we build the three lane widening. The footprint may be for four lanes, but the actual paving could be three.
- Comment: What will be different at the next meeting?
- Jeff Brillhart: At the next meeting we will have more answers to some of the issues raised and have more detail on the plans.
- Comment: At these meetings, there is a major concern about noise, but I haven't seen anyone here that is prepared to talk about noise.
- Jeff Brillhart: We will have a better handle on where we think the noise barriers will be located at the next meeting. There are still a few places that need additional evaluation as to whether they would qualify for a noise barrier. We need to review the ramifications of shifting the barrels for I-93 with respect to the noise barriers. Perhaps some barriers can be eliminated or perhaps the case for a barrier can be made more easily.
- Comment: Can you clarify the process again on how we go from these proposals to the final proposals? How is that decision made, and who makes that decision?
- Jeff Brillhart: The Department will continue to hold public informational meetings in the five communities throughout the fall and into the winter. Next spring, we will hold a Public Hearing. These informational meetings will give us a sense as to what should be done. The Department will continue weigh the different options and evaluate the impacts. At the same time, the Department will get input from the Environmental Agencies. The public will also give us direction. Based on that input, the Department will propose a preferred alternative. A Public Hearing will be held to receive feedback from all the stakeholders. The comments will be reviewed and all issues will be responded to. In some areas, the Department may have to do some additional study. This can take six months or more. This review and study will result in final recommendations for the Special Committee made up of Executive Councilors chairing the Public Hearing. They ultimately must pass judgement on the layout of the project.
- The Draft Environmental Impact Statement that is being written right now will lead us into the Public Hearing. This document will be revisited and turned into the Final Environmental Impact Statement. In the meantime, with all of that going on, the FHWA needs to make a decision as to whether to fund the project. The Environmental Agencies, principally the Army Corps of Engineers and NH Wetlands Bureau will need to make a decision as to whether they will permit the project. The EPA has the power to veto the project. The process is complicated, but inclusive.

